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ABSTRACT

This collection of 26 brief essays by college and high school faculty represents a variety of practical approaches that can be used in composition classes. After a foreword by the editor, the essays and their authors are as follows: "Writing as a Moral Activity" (Judith Anderson); "Specific Details (Orangen't You Wise to Use Them?)" (Frances Barber); "Creation of Scoring Matrix for Research Papers" (Ruth Bowden); "Collaborative Project" (Ellen Carey); "The Narrative 'Acme': Eatimus Anythingus vs. Accelerati Incredibulis" (Ed Duling); "Stimulating Writing Ideas: Introducing the Writing Topic" (Rebecca Feldmann); "Process-Based Research Papers" (Beverly Foulkrod); "Creating Children's Literature (Janet Gabbard); "Write an Essay? But This Is History Class!" (Susan Givler); "Sensory Deprivation as a Writing Project" (Terry Hartley); "Thesis-and-Support as a Versatile Writing Tool" (Brian Heaney); "Tonic for Tired-Blood Biographies" (Nancy Hempstead); "Problem Solving in a Physics Course--An Exercise in Communication" (Bob Henscheid); "Tricks of the Trade" (Cindy Herndon); "Using Techniques from the Writing Process to Teach Literature" (Angie Holloway); "To Journal or Not to Journal" (Mark Hopkins); "Getting Things into Perspective" (Nancy Jackson); "The Use of Reader's Theatre to Improve Speaking/Reading/Writing Skills" (Patti Kushmaul); "Revision: Step by Step" (Virginia Kennedy Martycz); "Connecting Reading and Writing: The Reading Journal" (Lynn Mealy); "A Place to Begin: Help for the Reluctant Writer" (Kim Music); "Riddle Me This" (Sarma Orlowski); "Writing with Letters" (Ann Pearson); "Writing to Share" (Cherie Stock); "Partner Outlining: A Strategy to Help Students Revise" (Lois Stover); and "The Good Old Days" (George Welsheimer). Attached to several papers are sample teaching aids illustrating the techniques described. (MS)

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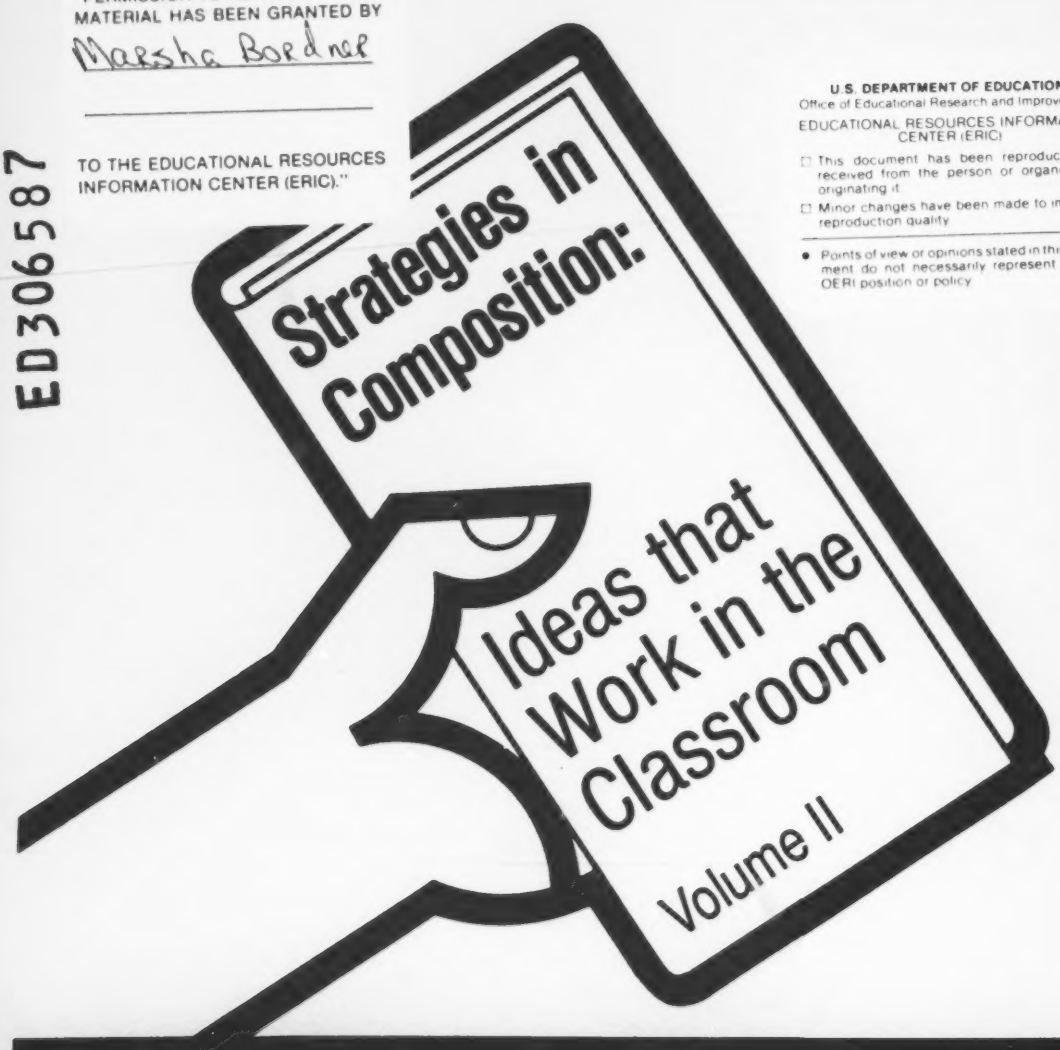

Early English Composition Assessment Program

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Clark State Community College

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STRATEGIES IN COMPOSITION:
Ideas that Work in the Classroom

Volume II

Editor: Marsha S. Bordner, Ph.D.
Director, Clark State Community College's EECAP

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FOREWORD

by Marsha S. Bordner
Clark State Community College

The Early English Composition Assessment Program (EECAP) had its beginning in 1985. In that year the Ohio Board of Regents announced that funding would be available for proposals that focused on two main goals: 1) to assess the writing skills of high school juniors to determine their strengths and weaknesses in composition and 2) to enhance the quality of instruction in writing in the schools. All proposals had to be developed collaboratively by colleges and high school English departments.

In response to the Regents' announcement, a group of English teachers and college faculty developed a plan to accomplish these goals. In the fall of each year the group would meet three times to conduct the actual assessment of writing. This would ensure that the results of the assessment would be returned early enough in the year to the school to have a genuine impact on student writing. During the winter, spring, and summer the group would concentrate on the improvement of instruction through in-service presentations.

The program has evolved much as it was planned. During the first fall meeting, the project participants have focused on the choice of a topic, or "prompt," for the juniors to write about. We have sought topics that students at all levels can write on quickly and effectively. After the first session, several possible topics have been field-tested in a local school outside of the project to determine which topic yielded the best response. Over the years we have discovered that creating good topics is no easy matter. Our successes as well as our failures have taught us much about topic development as it applies to large scale testing or individual classroom assignments.

At the second fall meeting, we use the sample essays generated from the field testing to practice both holistic and analytic scoring. We all read a series of the same essays and determine which ones are the strongest and weakest (our "holistic" response). We then determine the reasons why one essay is superior to another (our "analytic" response). Through group discussion we reach consensus on what we should be looking for in this particular essay, but more importantly, on what traits characterize any good essay.

The teachers then ask the juniors in their schools to write about the topic, and the essays are returned to the college. On the appointed day, the college and high school faculty gather for a full day to read and to score the approximately 2,000 essays. Each essay is read at least twice and three times if there is a discrepancy in the scoring. The results of the assessment are returned to the schools by mid-December.

During the winter and spring, the group meets three times to work on the second project goal: the enhancement of instruction. At the first meeting we have included school administrators to let them know what we are doing and to gain their support. The topics for our in-service presentations have focused on issues of interest to teachers and administrators alike. These have included writing across the curriculum and the reading/writing connection. The topics of the other meetings during the winter and spring have ranged from writing labs to writing about literature — whatever seems of greatest interest to the teachers.

Every other summer the program has sponsored a four-day summer workshop to allow for a more intensive in-service experience. During each of these workshops, the project participants have drafted, revised, and edited a piece on an effective writing strategy. These pieces have then been published in a booklet for distribution in the schools.

The overall results of the project have been positive for both the schools and the college. Each fall the students receive a computer-generated individualized report assess-

ing their writing skills. This report helps students, teachers, and counselors make appropriate placement decisions for their senior English classes. It also makes students aware of the skills they need to improve before they leave high school, thereby lessening the need for remediation on the college level. To further clarify the meaning of the results and to emphasize the importance of writing skills in any future career a student may seek, the assistant director visits each class in the project. The principal also receives a report that summarizes his/her school's overall performance compared to other schools in that project. This report helps each school identify areas of curricular strength and weakness.

The most important result, and the one that is least quantifiable, is the bonding, the reaching out, that has occurred between instructors at all levels. When the project began, the instructors were separated by arbitrary fences — college to high school, high school to junior high. In fact, the fences existed even within divisions of the college itself. Because the development of student writing skills is ultimately the responsibility of teachers in all disciplines, we invited faculty from business, engineering, health, as well as part-time faculty, to participate in our project. As the project evolved, we found that we had much more in common than we knew — that students were indeed students at any level and that the problems and joys of teaching writing crossed all boundaries. Our development of a "community" focused on a common goal will endure well beyond the parameters of the project itself.

WRITING AS A MORAL ACTIVITY

by Judith Anderson
Clark State Community College

When morality is mentioned in the context of the English curriculum, it most often surfaces in a censorship issue. From the high school play to *The American Heritage Dictionary*, a large number of works have been the focus of attacks designed to deny students access to materials deemed "immoral" by those who would restrict what others should be allowed to read.

However, morality as seen here is something completely different.

Jean Piaget describes moral development as dependent on cognitive development, and this development begins with a simple foundation: the ability to see another's point of view.

Piaget says that children cannot be expected to do this because their cognitive skills have not matured. Children's egocentric views of the world do not enable them to go outside their own experiences.

Morality in this egocentric stage is at best primitive. According to Lawrence Kohlberg, morality is based on obedience to rules rather than an understanding of the purpose of rules. Compliance is based on fear of punishment or hope of reward. An internal sense of right and wrong has not yet developed. When children are able to understand the purpose of rules and are able to use them and to modify them in a reasoned manner, they are ready to reach a higher level of morality. As children develop empathy, they can understand the pain another child feels if he is hurt.

Although this seems extremely simple and terribly obvious, it may not be all that easy to do — after all, adults often seem indifferent to each other's suffering. How can the Holocaust be possibly understood or explained? What would have happened if ordinary German citizens put themselves in the place of those who rode the boxcars to Auschwitz?

But what does all of this have to do with writing?

When writing is seen as an act of communication, awareness of the reader's point of view is essential. The writer cannot ignore it even if he wants to. The mere act of writing to be understood forces the issue; the writer cannot remain egocentric.

Now, to be sure, asking whether the writer is conscious of the reader is not in itself a moral activity, but it is a beginning.

And once begun, there are many ways to further this process. Exploring and writing about literature is one way to experience life from another's perspective. Issac Asimov calls fiction "the mirror of the human species," and E. L. Doctorow sees literature as "the moral intensity of the single soul." He adds that writers "distribute the suffering so that it can be borne."

Argumentation, which is seemingly one-sided, requires anticipation of potential objections and demands scrutiny of the evidence. How can bigotry stand up to reason? Sometimes even bare facts can be enlightening. One student reported that when she found out that blacks and whites have the same blood types, she felt a kinship she had never experienced before.

When students share their writing and invite comments from others, both reader and writer reach out and interact in a cooperative way that benefits both. Even expressive writing, which may be egocentric at first, may create opportunities for self-examination and reflection.

There are many other opportunities for moral development in the everyday business of education. Encountering new values, beliefs, and experiences; playing responsible roles; discussing, clarifying, and defending values; and making responsible decisions are among the activities that enhance moral development.

SPECIFIC DETAILS
(Orangen't You Wise To Use Them?)

by Frances Barber
Cedarville High School

Concerned with the lack of detail that I found in many student paragraphs, both expository and narrative, I devised the accompanying lesson on the power of using concrete details.

I begin the lesson with a short, teacher-directed discussion on detail using both board work and writing samples. Prompting the students, I try to get them to focus closely on a given object and to describe it as concretely as possible without "waxing eloquent." In the following example, we focused on the noun, *car;* however, we might just as well have focused on the verb, *saw.*

Board Work

Unspecific detail = I saw *a car.*
(Underline the noun.)
Detail = I saw a *a bright-colored car.*
(Add a general descriptor.)
Specific Detail = I saw a *red Chevy.*
(Dig deeper to come up with a strong descriptor.)
Concrete Specific Detail = I saw a *candy apple red Camaro.*
(Make the descriptor appeal to at least one of the senses.)

After the board work exercises, I read to them the opening three paragraphs of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With The Wind* as written by a vague writer. (Mark Twain's selection "Storm on Jackson Island" or Washington Irving's exposition on "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" work just as well.) The rewritten text of *Gone With The Wind* runs something like this: "Scarlet O'Hara wasn't really pretty, but she was cute. Well, she had long black hair and green eyes, and she was wearing a green dress that morning as she sat beside these two pretty good looking twins on her front porch. It was in April. It was in Atlanta. Oh, yeah . . . it was hot."

I follow this by reading Margaret Mitchell's first three paragraphs to them. Their ensuing comments demonstrate that they recognize that writing using concrete details is indeed stronger writing.

I pique their interest further by walking around the room, holding out a brown grocery bag before each student and asking each to draw from its contents. In turn, the students are surprised to find themselves holding oranges!

"In one properly formed paragraph, describe the orange you are holding," I say "in such a manner as to make it stand out from all the other oranges in the classroom. Do not, however, mark or change your orange's present physical condition in any way. Obviously, you'll have to be as specific as possible or no one will recognize your orange among the others. If you succeed, you can have your oranges to eat in class!"

Overcoming their initial puzzlement, the students examine their charges very carefully and write furiously for ten or so minutes.

After the students have completed the paragraphs, I assign student groups of approximately three to five students to act as teams and pile their oranges into the center of their pushed-together desks. Now the fun and learning really begins as the students read aloud one another's paragraphs and "cast their ballots," matching the oranges to the

writing samples. This activity goes extremely well since all my students seem eager to "win" their oranges. Throughout the room, students also make constructive and critical comments about the writing samples on hand — congenial peer tutoring and editing, if you will. When all the oranges have been examined closely considering the senses of sight, touch, and smell, and when all the oranges have been properly matched to the writing samples, the students are at last rewarded for their efforts with still another sensory detail, taste!

Note: This activity would work, of course, using other treats or objects in lieu of the oranges.

CREATION OF SCORING MATRIX FOR RESEARCH PAPERS

by Ruth Bowden
Bellefontaine High School

Reading and evaluating research papers from my sophomore students has become a dreaded spring ritual for me over the last six years. While my colleagues are playing golf, planting gardens, sunning, or averaging grades in preparation for bounding out of the building the instant that the school year ends, I am frantically reading my way through a hundred research papers.

Every year as I read these papers, I am delighted with some and chagrined by others. It is inconceivable to me that some students can so completely misunderstand the planning, preparation, and presentation of a research paper while others who have experienced the same instruction will turn out exactly what I have assigned.

Evaluating such diverse products inevitably presents problems, and I have found from my colleagues that they, too, receive a similar range of papers and feel uncomfortable with their scoring procedures. Consequently, we decided to create a scoring instrument for research papers that would reflect continuity from grade level to grade level and clearly define the teacher's expectations for the paper. Thus, the concept of the matrix was born.

Granted a half-day of released time by our curriculum director, we met with two representatives of Grade Write, Inc., of Worthington, Ohio, to develop a scoring matrix. We brainstormed and listed criteria for evaluating the papers at all grade levels. Then we grouped the criteria into categories; next, we arranged the categories in a workable order. After discussing, revising, and editing, we arrived at the matrix that follows.

Each teacher was able to assign point values to each section of the matrix as he or she chose. I distributed the matrices several weeks prior to the due date of the papers and went over them with my students so they would know exactly what was expected and how much each section was worth.

In evaluating the papers, I have found the matrix to be very helpful. After tallying points for each section on the matrix, I feel more comfortable with the student's overall grade on the paper. The students have a better understanding of the teacher's expectations, and the teacher has clearly defined standards for grading.

Bellefontaine High School Research Paper Scoring Matrix

Student_____ Teacher:_____

	OUTLINE	
_____	Follows format	
_____	Categories (topics) organized	
_____	Adequate subtopics/supports	
_____	No outline	
	NOTECARDS	
_____	Notecards Organized	
_____	Information on cards is on related topic	
_____	Sources identified	
_____	Main points summarized in student's own words	
_____	Notecards provide sufficient data	
_____	No notecards	
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	
_____	Include bibliography cards	
_____	Bibliography cards correctly formatted	
_____	Bibliography page follows correct format	
_____	Bibliography has required # of sources	
_____	Bibliography includes variety of sources	
_____	No bibliography page	
	FOOTNOTES	
_____	Follow correct form	
_____	Proper use of footnotes	
_____	Footnotes compatible with bibliography page	
	CONTENT/ORGANIZATION	
_____	Topic sufficiently limited	
_____	Includes rough draft	
_____	Thesis statement is clear & inclusive	
_____	Thesis statement appears in introduction	
_____	Body supports the thesis with information drawn from research	
_____	Body paragraphs follow logical order	
_____	Proper paragraphing	
_____	Conclusion restates thesis/draws conclusion(s)	
_____	Content appropriate to length requirement	
	MECHANICS	
_____	Sentence structure correct/varied	
_____	Vocabulary is appropriate for paper	
_____	Usage correct (verb tense, pronouns, subject-verb agreement, modifiers)	
_____	Correct capitalization	
_____	Correct punctuation	
_____	Quotations correctly punctuated	
_____	Correct spelling	
	FORMAT	
_____	Appropriate cover	
_____	Title page follows format	
_____	Follows manuscript form (Indentation, margins, ink/typewritten, correctly spaced, one side of page, pagination, neatness)	

COLLABORATIVE PROJECT

by Ellen Carey
Clark State Community College

At a recent Conference on College Composition and Communication, the key term was "collaboration" for writing tasks. For my technical writing students, I borrowed and adapted an idea from the conference that develops the students' creative skills, encompasses different types of writing samples, and calls for a sense of responsibility and dependability on the students' parts.

DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENT:

Students are assigned to small groups (usually four or five in a group). Each group is responsible for developing a game, supplying the necessary equipment, writing the instructions, and submitting a final report. The assignment runs for four weeks with class time designed for group meetings. Students missing class during project meetings will be docked points.

SITUATION:

The students are told they are technicians for the Clark Toy Company. Since sales have been slow, the company needs innovative ideas for new games. Each group's task is to develop such a game. The final product is evaluated by the other groups on the assigned "play day." (See Guide to Evaluation of Games.)

STUDENT ROLES:

At the first meeting, students decide on the role they will assume: technical editor, equipment technicians, instruction writer, or publicity director.

The *Technical Editor* organizes the group. His/her duties include compiling, editing, and proofreading the group's final report. The final report consists of a title page, an introduction, a summation of log-progress reports, a description of the game design and theme, instructions, and publicity reports. Editors receive up to ten bonus points depending on the final product.

The *Equipment/Supply Technician* designs or obtains the necessary supplies for the games. Students are encouraged to avoid additional costs by using materials found at the college or at home. The equipment technician must write a description of the game so readers visualize the mechanism without seeing the actual set-up. The student will supply an individual progress memo to the technical editor after each meeting.

The *Instruction Writer* writes a set of instructions for the game procedure. The instructions should be clear enough for the designated age group. The writer should study other game instuctions to decide on the best format. The student submits a progress memo to the editor after each meeting.

The *Publicity Director* writes a press release and an advertisement promoting this new game. He/she submits copies to the editor prior to the assigned "play day."

At the first announcement of this project, there are the usual moans and groans; the students question the point of the assignment. After accepting the challenge, however, they are surprised to find that they are engaging in a learning experience and having fun at the same time!

Guide To Evaluation of Games

LEVELS:	Poor	Fair	Excellent
Points:	1-3	4-7	8-10

Indicate level by filling in the appropriate numerical value.

Example: Evaluated the originality of games as fair: 6

GAME CONCEPT:

Originality

Action: Play moves smoothly — maintains attention of player

INSTRUCTIONS:

Clear, concise, easy to understand by the particular age level

EQUIPMENT:

Design

Appropriate and sufficient components

PUBLICITY/PROMOTION:

Attention getters

Informative

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Would you buy this game for your child? yes____ no____

If NO, indicate why:

How long did the game take to play?

THE NARRATIVE "ACME"
Eatimus Anythingus vs. *Accelerati Incredibulis*

by Ed Duling
Cedarville High School

The predictable chain of events which befall Wile E. Coyote in each Road Runner episode serves as the centerpiece of my unit in teaching narrative sequence. Using this unit, featuring the Coyote's *(Eatimus Anythingus)* attempts and failures to catch the Road Runner *(Accerlerati Incredibulis)*, gives the students a chance to practice sequencing words. Unlike the ill-fated Acme Products that fail the Coyote, or the Road Runner's cunning which stymies the predator, this unit will aid students in reaching their "acme" in narrative writing.

To teach this concept to junior high students, a commercially available VCR tape of Road Runner cartoons is needed. Previewing is a necessity — albeit a happy one. Any additional cartoons on the tape may be used for more practice or testing purposes.

The students are shown a Road Runner cartoon and asked to jot down the events as they occur. (They'll need some light in the room to do this.) Reshowing the episode for fun and rechecking is a plus. In fact, using the *first* showing as the "watch-for-fun" episode is an alternate procedure.

With completed lists of antics, the youngsters create narrative paragraphs, using sequencing words like those listed below:

next	leads to
first, second, third, etc.	then
following that	nonetheless
finally	at last
after that	in the beginning
in conclusion	in the middle of all this
in the end	

While these are long paragraphs, and could be useful in teaching paragraphing, I avoid the temptation to do so until later in the term when the students can be guided to two or three paragraph narratives of the ten to twelve anti-Road Runner tactics that normally occur in each cartoon.

The narrative paragraphs may also be used to introduce or reinforce sentence combining. For example, two attempts to "do in" the Road Runner may be blended into one sentence.

Besides this central activity, I frequently generate lists of sequencing words through assigning a paragraph in which students must explain some sequence of events with which they are familiar. Used as a preface to the Road Runner, these paragraphs, for example, focus on the events necessary to ready a 4-H project or to learn a sports skill. After class discussion and this exercise, students are guided to select and list sequencing words and phrases, some of which they have used automatically in their paragraphs, some of which have been elicited through teacher questioning, and some of which have been taken from textbook lists.

Following the Road Runner activity, I use narrative retelling of literature — prose and poetry — as well as comic strip panels to further practice the use of sequencing words.

STIMULATING WRITING IDEAS: INTRODUCING THE WRITING TOPIC

by Rebecca Feldmann
Rhodes Career Center

One of the most awkward situations for a writing instructor can occur after he/she introduces a writing topic. How does the instructor generate some degree of enthusiasm in the students? How does the instructor stimulate creativity in the students? The initial introduction of the topic can help the student who normally draws a writing blank and the instructor who may dread announcing a writing topic.

Brainstorming has always been a reliable introductory tool. It allows ideas to flow through the classroom, and as the instructor writes specific words on the board or on the overhead projector, students can become actively involved in the process of developing ideas. However, the instructor must steer the discussion in the desired direction. Also, some students may rely too heavily on the words written on the board or on the overhead projector, while others try to avoid the help the brainstormed words provide. Still, brainstorming can involve the class in the introductory process and stimulate ideas.

Role playing the topic is another method of introduction. For example, on the topic of success, an instructor may ask one student to portray his idea of what success is and another student may portray his idea of failure. Role playing can help other students relax and enjoy a different type of class. Unfortunately, since not everyone is an aspiring actor, this method is limited to a particular type of classroom. Nevertheless, role playing shouldn't be avoided. In fact, an instructor may be very surprised and pleased with students' reactions to this introductory method.

Using visual aids, such as cartoons, handouts, videos, etc., may not only stimulate ideas, but can be used as examples in the writing itself. Again, using the topic of success, several different cartoons showing success in wealth, family life, or other interpretations of the word may be shown to the students and discussed. As with brainstorming, students may veer from the original topic, but visual aids create more ideas than they stunt.

Announcing a topic for a writing assignment will almost always prompt groans of frustration rather than creative ideas. To help save students and instructors alike, a variety of introductory methods is necessary. The actual method depends upon the instructor and the students.

PROCESS-BASED RESEARCH PAPERS

by Beverly Foulkrod
Springfield South High School

The words "research paper" always elicit groans of anguish, threats of rebellion, and cries of, "How are you going to grade this?" "What do you want?"

Over the years, I have developed several strategies to make the work of both the students and teachers easier. Since following instructions is one key to success in writing a research paper, I give my juniors the following point evaluation sheet as a checklist to help them plan and to include with the final paper. (Actually, I run off enough so all the students have two because most lose or mutilate the first copy before the final papers reach my hands.) This sheet lets the students know exactly what sections to turn in and how these sections will be evaluated.

I give a significant number of points on documentation on the evaluation sheet to force students to follow every comma, period, underline, etc., necessary for correct form. I warn students that I will be picky enough to split hairs on a flea. Students hate me at the time, but those who go on to college return to tell me that I taught them to survive in college.

The point values on the evaluation sheet are also designed to encourage students to abandon the safety of the familiar encyclopedias and to branch out into a variety of sources. The five minimum sources are the least that I expect. Extra sources are a way to earn extra points. I used to worry that some sudents would overload on sources so that they could not possibly get lower than an A+ regardless of how terrible the paper was. It has never happened. Students who care enough to use extra sources also care enough to take care in other details and turn in a good paper. I believe I am subtly teaching students to give more than is required.

One last goal I have for the research paper is to teach the students the process of writing. The rough paper is submitted in parts so they can repair as they go along. By the time we get to the final draft, I have seen all the pieces. This whole process is designed to make them feel comfortable with form so they can get on with content.

I still get a few, "Dag, man, that's bent!" comments when students get their papers back. However, most of them learn that there are ways to avoid penalties, gain yardage, and win the research paper game.

GENERAL ENGLISH II (Class Period _____)

DATE (turned in) APRIL ____, 198__ NAME_____

POINT EVALUATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH PAPER

FIRST IMPRESSION ..... 5_____

TITLE PAGE ..... 10_____

OUTLINE (Formal outline) ..... 15_____

INTRODUCTION ..... 15_____

TRANSITIONS ..... 15_____

CONTENT ..... 25_____

CONCLUSION ..... 15_____

LOGIC IN PRESENTATION ..... 15_____

FOLLOWED OUTLINE ..... 10_____

INTEREST LEVEL ..... 10_____

GENERAL APPEARANCE ..... 20_____

LEGIBILITY (Bonus of 25 if typed very well) ..... 25_____

MECHANICS (Here I list textbook pages.) ..... 100_____
1 point *OFF* per minor error
(Agreement, caps, case, coordination/subordination, diction, misplaced/dangling modifiers, parallelism, possessives, punctuation, shifts in tense or person, spelling, structure, etc.)
2 points *OFF* per major error (fragments, run-ons)

LENGTH (750 TO 1,000 WORDS) ..... 20_____

DOCUMENTATION (5 sources minimum) ..... 100_____
(Here I list textbook pages.)
First of any type, 20 points each
Second of any type, 10 points each
Third of any type, 5 points each
Fourth of any type, 2 points each
Fifth of any type, 1 point each
5 points each per definition footnote

BIBLIOGRAPHY (5 sources minimum)
Points same basis as documentation ..... 100_____
(Here I list textbook pages.)

ON TIME (Plus 10 points per day for early paper, up to 50 points) ..... _____
(MINUS 10 POINTS PER DAY FOR LATE PAPER.)

BONUS 25 points for any paper good enough to be used as an example ..... _____
(Paper will become teacher's possession.)

CREATING CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

by Janet Gabbard
Mechanicsburg High School

The process of writing can be practiced in a variety of units in the English curriculum. The trick is to make the wieldy process of prewriting, writing, and revising an enjoyable and profitable one for students and teacher. One unit that works on many grade levels and, in addition, incorporates reading, writing, and speaking is the production of children's literature. The plan that follows has been used at the upper secondary level.

I. Sampling children's literature

Begin by allowing students to refamiliarize themselves with children's literature, both old favorites and the newest publications. Have a reading day or two to permit a sampling of children's books. The elementary librarian will probably help with materials. (I have a basic collection to which I add by borrowing new selections.)

II. Analyzing

Establish standards of quality in children's literature. An assignment sheet is required here for reporting on reading. Students report on ten books, first on the setting, characters, conflict, and resolution of the ten books and then on the student's reaction to the books, the imagined reaction of a child, and some desirable or undesirable qualities of the ten books. Students will have an assignment sheet for each of the ten books.

End with a class discussion on standards. Note special stylistic considerations such as rhyme, color, creative illustrations, shape, and size.

The teacher should inform students of how their performance and product will be judged. At this point in the unit, I usually say that the standards established on the sampling of children's literature will also serve as the evaluation method for their books, but credit will also be given for all activities in the unit. I also say that no evaluation will be made of drawing technique.

III. Sharing

The students share with the class, in a one minute informal talk, the favorite books of their own childhood. (If students don't have a favorite from childhood, they will probably just choose one from the collection to share.)

IV. Prewriting

Turn students' minds to their own writing with the following activities:

a. Choose a child that you know or have observed. Write a character sketch of that child.

b. Choose an animal with which you have spent some time or an animal you have observed. What human qualities does the animal exhibit?

c. Brainstorm with whole class (or in small groups with large group to close the discussion) the problems that a child faces.

d. Create a dream world or a fantasy situation. "I was just . . . , when ALL OF A SUDDEN . . . "

V. Begin a first draft with a tentative rough story line with directions for illustrations or rough sketches.

Revise and add the story line and sketched illustrations in a second draft.

Write a final draft and illustrate. Make a cover.

VI. Revising

The writing process should include revision between each of the three drafts. After

the first draft, students would benefit from just telling another student about plans for their book. Partners may respond with questions to help clarify or make suggestions. After the second draft, a peer reader should respond to questions such as "What is the purpose of the book?" or "What is the best feature of the book?"

VII. Following Up

Complete the unit with presentation activities and evaluation. Students should "show and tell" their books to the class with an oral presentation. Then, students' books should be displayed for enjoyment in the classroom or in the media center. Students may wish to read their books to elementary students. Finally, students should write an evaluation of the unit, answering the following questions, "What part(s) did you enjoy most? Least?"

Students really enjoy most parts of this unit, especially the opportunity to return to the positive experiences of childhood. Writing their own children's literature also presents an entirely different audience for their writing. The students recognize that producing good children's literature is a challenge but one they feel confident they can handle. Beginning writing with that attitude makes all the difference in the results. In the process, a new author of children's books may be discovered or material worthy of professional publication may be produced.

WRITE AN ESSAY? BUT THIS IS HISTORY CLASS!

by Susan Givler
Bellefontaine High School

"I got a crummy D- on my essay. I answered her question. She said to write on 'Should the U.S. support the Contras,' and I gave her a whole sentence. I said yes, because if we didn't help the Contras, the Communists would take over Mexico and then move into Texas, and it would be just like Vietnam. I even put in a couple of verbs. What does she want? Evidence! She wants evidence. What is this, *L.A. Law*? I told her what I thought, but my opinion wasn't good enough for her. Why do I need to get proof the Communists are going to take over Texas? Everybody knows that. So she gave us a week to prepare for this writing, Monday to Friday. She said to read the newspapers, watch the news, talk to people. Yeah . . . I asked Nick if we should help the Contras and he said 'What's a Contra?' What a nerd. He'd never even thought about it. I tried. I mean, don't I have the radio on while I cruise the shopping center lot? I get the news. 'Take notes,' she said. I got no time to take notes. I got football practice. Besides, how much can you write on one of those dinky 3 x 5 cards she lets you use? Organization she wants. Organization. Who needs organization for one sentence?

So she says 'revise it.' She wants me to do it again. The same thing! Only now she wants at least five sentences. And she wants them all different. With periods. Angelica Vermicelli got an A. Like she wrote a whole page. She memorizes *Newsweek* I think. For next Friday I have to revise it, support my opinion with evidence, and turn the thing in again. And I've got to give her the 'D-' one with the new one. If I can find it. I think it's in the trunk of the car. You'd think she'd get bored reading the same stuff twice.

Well I'll show her. I'll have a good argument and lots of evidence. Plenty of evidence. I got a date with Angelica Vermicelli Thursday night.

This is going on all year she says. One week we write, the next week we revise it. A different topic on a current event every other week. I wonder if we'll write on the elections?

I wonder if Urbana needs another quarterback . . ."

SENSORY DEPRIVATION AS A WRITING PROMPT

by Terry Hartley
Benjamin Logan High School

During the discussion of objective description with my tenth grade students, we focus on the topic of sensory impressions. We review the five senses and the kinds of information they provide us about the world. As a part of the discussion of dominant impression, I talk about which senses are most important to our daily lives. Emphasizing the point, I ask how much life would be affected if we lost any one of the senses: taste, touch, smell, hearing, or sight. Following the discussion, class is concluded with a journal entry on the topic, "What would your life be like if you lost your sense of _____?"

A few days later the students arrive to discover a series of "stations" set up at the rear of the room. There is one station for each of four senses: sight, touch, hearing, and smell. At each of these stations the students carry out a number of activities to simulate what it would be like to be deprived of that particular sense. For instance, to simulate the loss of sight, a student is blindfolded and asked to, in turn, dial a telephone, pour a glass of water, and spread peanut butter on a slice of bread. To simulate the loss of touch, a student is asked to don a pair of heavy gloves and then put on and button a large shirt and tie a pair of shoes. For deafness, a student must, with the aid of a volunteer "reader," attempt to answer survey questions which are mouthed, but not voiced. At the last station students plug their nostrils with sterile cotton balls and then attempt to identify various pungent substances (onion, horseradish, perfume, liniment) hidden in paper bags. Taste deprivation seems too difficult to simulate easily and safely, and so it is not included.

The students have great fun both attempting the tasks and watching others. The room only gets a little messy, and the activity provides a wealth of things to talk about. The entire class time is used except for the last ten minutes. During that time the students return to their journals, reread their entries from a few days before, and are asked to reflect upon and write down their impressions on how their "predictions" stand up in light of the simulations.

The next day the students write on a choice of two prompts: "What would a day in your life be like if you lost your sense of _____?" or "What would you have to do to cope with the loss of _____?", again using one of the four senses involved in the activity. The assignment then follows the usual process of revision, editing, and polishing before being submitted to the teacher.

Apart from its consciousness-raising qualities, the simulation creates lively discussion and can be followed up on and expanded upon in several different ways. To name only two, it can be used to lead into readings by or about handicapped persons, or it can be used as the basis for a biographical mini-research paper about a person who has overcome a handicap to become successful. A little thought can produce a number of other possibilities.

The sensory deprivation simulations themselves are simple to set up and take only a day out of the usual classroom activities. They are limited only by the imagination of the teacher. I freely confess that the basic idea of simulations came from our local home economics department and a workshop on learning disabilities which I attended several years ago. I am grateful to both.

THESIS-AND-SUPPORT AS A VERSATILE WRITING TOOL

by Brian Heaney
Clark State Community College

Some of us may have seen the publisher's poster of the five-part freshman theme which depicts a cartoon dragon. The introduction is the fanged mouth and head; the three-paragraph body consists of three middle segments, and a spiky tail forms the conclusion. Not only students, but also, if comments I've heard are sincere, many high school and college writing teachers see this beast as a numbing taskmaster. But the thesis-and-support framework can be a powerful, flexible aid to author and reader, as the following mini-lecture illustrates.

Here is the core of what I tell students about thesis-and-support: First, it is clear. Even though the thesis-and-support structure is not natural, it is time-honored and therefore well-recognized. It comes from the classical five-part argumentative discourse minus the *refutatio: exordium, narratio, confirmatio,* and *peroratio* (introduction, statement of fact, confirmation of fact, and conclusion). Western oratorical tradition has kept this functional system of division through the ages; about ten years ago, in the ministry, I learned the simplest form of it I know: "Tell them what you're going to tell; tell them; then tell them what you told them." Perhaps thanks to faithful composition teachers around the world, readers and writers are used to it. They learn early to expect the pattern when they confront an essay. Second, once these functions are arranged, any subject matter can be tightly unified within them if the writer reminds the audience of the controlling idea at the end of each paragraph as well as in the topic sentence. An essay which does that looks schematically like this (The "X" lines show an effective position for the controlling idea and subsequent references to it.):

Introductory Paragraph

_____
_____
_____
_____
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
(Thesis Statement)

Body Paragraphs

_____
_____
_____
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
_____
_____
_____
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Concluding Paragraph

_____
_____
_____
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

The writer doesn't repeat the words of the thesis statement in the following paragraphs but hints at the main idea in different ways. This picture is not fancy, but it's functional. It anticipates the reader's need to review providing its own recursive, reinforcing, persuasive pattern.

Third, the structure is convenient and quick, once writers have learned it. Many students and teachers habitually think generally before specifically, and the thesis-and-support structure nests paragraphs which move from general to specific within a larger structure which moves the same way. Students can rely on this repetitive format for all-purpose use. When an essay exam faces them, for example, they can immediately begin setting generalizations and details in a clear pattern rather than wonder how to arrange what they've discovered while pre-writing. They can devote more attention to style because a powerful argumentative design is already intact.

Making the transition from some pre-writing activity — brainstorming, freewriting, clustering, directed questioning — to the thesis-and-support arrangement poses a problem which should be explained here. Student writers must realize that the structure is often artificial; the way our minds work is not necessarily the way the structure works. If, for example, a student begins to discover a topic by freewriting, details rather than generalizations may be first to surface.

Long free-written passages at a low level of abstraction mean the student's major revising task will be to find a general statement or thesis by looking at the smaller, incoherently arranged details in the freewrite. In the student's final draft, however, the controlling idea will emerge toward the beginning, and the more specific supporting material will, for the reader's benefit, appear to follow from and be subordinate to that idea. The student's goal, therefore, is to reach a stage in the writing process where she purposely re-arranges general and specific ideas not in the order in which they come to mind but in the clearest order for the reader's understanding. In practice, students need to be sure that they have discovered a clear thesis from their pre-writing, a thesis they can feel comfortable supporting with their subordinate material, before they write the next draft.

Finally, even though the thesis-and-support structure has, in many schools for many years, been stiffened into the five-part theme, it can be extemely versatile. The simple generalization/example pattern of development fits it well, but once a controlling idea is in place (not to worry yet about the introduction, that can be written any time), writers can fit any pattern of development between the opening and the closing. Narrative can be used to illustrate the main point. Comparison-and-contrast can support a qualitative assertion. A cause-and-effect analysis can provide background and warrant for a controlling claim. And three "body paragraphs" need not end the development; whole books have been structured around thesis-and-support. Students can learn, then, from carrying this structure through different modes of discourse, that it's possible, even pleasurable, to subordinate many different, complex, and powerful ways of thinking to one significant, broad statement.

The conclusion of this whole matter is that students feel they've gained a powerful communication tool, and generally by the end of a quarter, they can use it. After a few futile attempts to find a main idea, I may tell them that they've written a good focused freewrite and that they should now put their conclusion at the beginning and start again. Then they begin to grasp the inherent strength of the thesis-and-support structure. As their essays develop, the content reinforces itself, and if they use the range of developmental patterns at their disposal, nobody recognizes the old, mechanical five-part theme chugging away beneath the surface.

TONIC FOR TIRED-BLOOD BIOGRAPHIES

by Nancy Hempstead
Benjamin Logan High School

Usually when I introduce the literary unit of biography to my tenth graders, some well-intentioned student will offer, "But we already know all of this; we wrote biographies in eighth grade!" Since most of us have the task of further developing material which was first introduced to our students in prior years' classes, we all seek ways to inject life and vigor into what some students see as "tired blood" topics.

I have used the following strategy to allow my students to focus on the genre of biography while helping them to perfect their writing skills.

ACTIVITY 1:

Since the veneration of the driver's license is akin to idolatry at the tenth grade level anyhow, I employ the driver's license as a visual aid in my introductory lesson. Using the overhead projector, I display a facsimile of a driver's license. At the same time I distribute to each student a small (3″ x 2″) white card. At the bottom of each card and on the transparency are spaces with the following items written:

DRIVER'S LICENSE _____ _____ _____					(PHOTOGRAPH)
age	sex	height	weight	hair	eyes

When students have filled out their cards, I read random physical features and ask them to indicate by a show of hands how many of the apparently "individual" descriptions given by the class apply to them. We then discuss what is wrong with this kind of description; we decide that the students lack "faces" (both figuratively and literally). We begin our discussion of good individualized description. To demonstrate the contrast between non-individualized description and vivid description, at this point I usually read aloud three or four duplicated samples of good biographical writing. Using those passages which I have provided, we discuss what specific bits of information produce lively characters instead of clichés.

ACTIVITY 2:

Because I want my students to be able to visualize a contrast between the unsatisfactory "generic" description (the license features) and really good writing (which imparts particularity of character), I put this second activity on an 8½″ x 11″ white sheet of paper. Each student receives the same fifteen open-ended statements. After explaining that sincerity and detail are essential, I allow them to use one-half hour of in-class time and one evening at home to complete the following work.

PERSONALITY PROFILE

Please respond to each question. Some will require only brief responses, while others will ask not only for a *response* but also your *reason* for believing as you do. If you require additional space, please continue on the other side.

1. My favorite television show is_____
   because_____
2. My favorite pig-out food is_____
3. One thing which I think I do better than most of my friends is
   _____
4. One place (city, country, etc.) which I hope to visit some day is_____
   because_____
5. My favorite popular song is_____
6. The best book I have ever read is _____
7. Most of my closest friends would be surprised to know that I
   _____
8. What is one thing which people seem to notice first about me?
   _____
9. The color which best fits my personality is_____
   because_____
10. My favorite free-time activity is_____
11. I think that the worst commercial on T.V. is the_____
    because_____
12. The silliest thing I have ever done is_____
    _____
13. My personal hero is_____
    because_____
14. The one quality which I admire most in a person is_____
    _____
15. If I had to describe myself to a stranger I would say_____
    _____

After the class has completed this task, I then match each student with a partner, attempting to assign those who are not well-acquainted. Once paired, students exchange personality profile sheets and spend time quietly reading the responses. I suggest to them that they circle their partner's four most interesting responses.

ACTIVITY 3:

The next class period begins with a discussion of why we remember so much about our favorite television/media personalities. We discuss the *National Enquirer* modus operandi (all the trivia, foibles, and flaws that "enquiring minds want to know"). Each student then attempts to use this approach to interview his partner — getting more detail or clarifying any of the responses on the personality profile.

Next, I ask the students to attempt to cluster the fifteen responses into three or four major categories, aligning those which focus on similar aspects of character. Students first work on this with their partners, and then we check the responses as a class. (Categories usually fall into interests, behavior, likes/dislikes, appearance.)

After this discussion, I distribute samples of two written descriptions; one is a lengthy "listing" of features, while the other is a fluid, orderly assessment of a person. They are directed from a generalized impression to a more detailed one; they are guided to notice that detail must not merely exist — it must support something.

Then they are asked to examine their partner's personality profile and to construct a biographical sketch employing the techniques we have just discussed. The student

biographers then share their rough drafts with their partners. Comments are made and the composition is taken home to be re-written by the biographer.

ACTIVITY 4:

As the last step, the biographers return papers to the subject students who then are told to edit the writing. The final draft is then put on the most "fluorescent" paper I can find — for the purpose of visual contrast. I remind the students of our progress from merely generic —to individualized description (small white card — plain, flat, white — to fluorescent). I like to emphasize an approach somewhat reminiscent of Goldilocks' visit to the three bears (i.e. "too small . . . too large . . . just right").

SUMMARY

This strategy is very effective with my sophomores, not only because they respond well to sequenced sets of composition activities, but because they have a naiveté and curiosity that makes the personality profile work. With some revision or omissions, however, the approach could be used at many grade or content levels.

I enjoy using this technique because it helps me visually show my students that the best biographical writing is neither generic nor unstructured; it must be orderly, detailed, and interesting. I hope that they no longer will accept the notion that biographical writing must be a sterile repetition of vital statistics or a mere chronology of events in a character's life.

PROBLEM-SOLVING IN A PHYSICS COURSE— AN EXERCISE IN COMMUNICATION

by Bob Henscheid
Clark State Community College

Students entering my introductory physics classes at Clark State Community College are initially faced with applying the problem-solving method. Problem-solving infers the ability to read a word problem, ascertain what physical quantities are involved, apply an appropriate equation, perform the necessary algebraic and mathematical manipulations, and finally produce a solution which is usually the numerical answer to the problem. All of this must be done in an orderly manner.

In most cases the students have not approached the solution to mathematical equations as more than an exercise in producing the correct numerical answer to an equation, which in most cases has no physical meaning to them. Additionally, most students do not have the ability to translate a word problem into a mathematical expression (an equation).

I believe that this lack of ability stems from a failure to realize that an equation is simply a shorthand expression for the written statement of a problem. The scientist or engineer simply creates his own symbolic language to write relatively complex statements in a concise, structured format.

In order to reduce student anxiety in my introductory applied physics courses, I have introduced the concept of problem-solving as an exercise in written communication. Algebra is the language, equations are the sentences, and the solution becomes the ordered structure of the paragraph.

This approach is difficult for students to grasp for two reasons. First, during the students' primary and secondary education, only answers to mathematical operations were emphasized. Writing down the procedures and steps taken to get the answers was not emphasized. As a result, the students did not acquire the ability to show literally the thought process involved in finding the solution to problems. This is similar to answering a question with an incomplete sentence.

The second reason students are not able to solve problems stems from their inability to apply mathematical and algebraic skills to real world physical problems. Algebra and math operations were taught to students as drill exercises, but the students did not learn applications for these exercises in most cases.

In order to get my students to approach problem-solving, I describe the procedure as similar to writing a paragraph in English composition. This implies a complete, orderly, grammatically correct description of their entire thought process. First, they must select the appropriate equation (the lead sentence of a paragraph), solve the equation algebraically and substitute numerical numbers as appropriate (develop the paragraph with supporting details), and finally write down the answer (the final sentence of the paragraph). In following this procedure, the students show the instructor (as well as a future employer) the procedure used to support the answer to a given problem.

Although the above approach to teaching problem-solving has proven fruitful, it does not always produce desired student outcomes. The main reasons for this lie primarily with deep-seated student habits. Students find it difficult to be orderly when solving math problems; students assume the instructor knows what they are thinking; students write down unnecessary equations and procedures, especially under pressure of exams; and finally, students do not apply the procedures effectively.

In order to reinforce the problem-solving technique that I have described, I am attempting to implement an additional strategy in the above outline of the problem-solving process. I intend to have the students write a paragraph on the approach they

would take to solve a given problem, then translate the paragraph into equations and solutions to the problem. In this manner the students might even learn a bit of English in the process.

As a physics instructor I find it extremely challenging, but also a bit frustrating, to teach problem-solving techniques to introductory engineering students. I feel that teaching problem-solving as an exercise in written communication has reduced this frustration and increased the challenge. I am constantly searching for adaptations that might improve students' actions, not only in learning the principles of physics but also hopefully improving the students' ability to communicate effectively.

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

by Cindy Herndon
Riverside High School

Over the years, I have lamented over student papers, often asserting, "This student could not possibly have proofread this paper." After reading the paper aloud, even my nine year old knew that something "didn't sound right."

In an attempt to combat this problem, I now require students to tape-record each writing assignment. Both the tape and the composition are handed in for a grade. Not only does the act of recording each paper force each student to reread and re-evaluate what he has written, it also has the added advantage of forcing the student to hone his speaking skills.

On the first day of class, I inform my students of the necessity of purchasing a cassette tape for recording their compositions. Since most students have access to both "boom boxes" and blank cassettes (usually for pirating pop songs from the radio), this generally presents no problem. I assure them, however, that if obtaining a tape or a recorder is a problem, they may contact me. I will provide them with both. (Each floor in our building has access to a tape recorder; and since we also have the benefit of an in-school radio station, we have additional recording facilities, as well.)

As I grade each student's paper, I play his cassette — which enables me to hear what he wants the composition to say. At times, the words on the tape do not match the words on the text; the student has edited as he has read. At such times, I call the student aside to follow along in the text as he listens to his tape, listening for word-for-word accuracy.

By using the tape, I am also able to record comments for the student regarding the composition which I have just read and heard. By speaking to the student, I am able to gain greater immediacy with him. He also has the added advantage of being able to stop the tape, check the paper, and assimilate my comments.

These tapes may also be used in class. Good (or poor) responses to the topic may be played for the class as examples. For students who cringe at reading aloud (and who, therefore, deliver a poor classroom reading), the tape may help them become more relaxed about oral readings. (One of the most backward students delivered a dynamic reading on her paper on tape which astounded the class.)

Since students started using tape recorders in my composition classes, I have witnessed a significant improvement in their ability to communicate both in written and oral discourse.

USING TECHNIQUES FROM THE WRITING PROCESS TO TEACH LITERATURE

by Angie Holloway
Fairborn High School

Visual outlining, focused quick writes, and collaboration — techniques often used in the writing process — can also be valuable tools in teaching literature. Last year I used these methods to help clear up confusion over point of view in Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*.

Point of view can be confusing to students, especially when it is complicated by an unreliable narrator such as Huck Finn. How can a student separate Huck's view from Mark Twain's more sophisticated view and then from his own view? Because my students did not understand that Huck's conclusions were not the only possible conclusions, many were failing to appreciate Mark Twain's humor. We were on Chapter 8, "The Feud," when I began to despair. Lectures, definitions, and explanations had had little effect. Nobody was laughing.

I decided to see if clustering, a form of visual outlining, would help my students discover what they'd been missing. I devised a quick assignment that could be accomplished in one class period. In the first step I asked students to cluster the items in the Grangerford house with as many details as they could find. The second step was to compose a one paragraph quick write defending one of the following contentions: Mark Twain admires the Grangerford house or Mark Twain is making fun of the Grangerford house.

Some students with a narrow reading experience and accustomed to totally identifying with the main character found only the positive details. Their clusters included items like the vivid colors of the artificial fruit, the interesting books on the table, and the beautiful clock. They even presented Emmeline's drawings as artistically displayed on the wall. They either did not notice or purposely ignored any derogatory clues.

Other students with a sharper eye for detail noticed that the artificial fruit was chipped, that the four books were each one neatly placed on the corner of the table, and that the "beautiful" clock struck 150 times. Their clusters on Emmeline's pictures included the dead bird on its back with its feet up and the four extra arms in the suicide portrait. These students concluded that Mark Twain was making fun of the Grangerford house.

When the two groups began collaborating and then debating their results, real learning took place. The students who had said that Twain admired the Grangerford house now had an opportunity to further examine the details and they began asking each other questions about those details. If the author thought the fruit was so neat, why did he mention it was chipped? And who *really* would want black crayon "I shall never see thee more alas" pictures all over the wall? One student said that a red and blue eagle spread all over the dinner cloth would look gross.

The next step was easy. If *they* came to a conclusion about the situation that was different from Huck's, then why shouldn't the author also? Now, having learned to separate themselves from Huck and Huck from the author, they were in a position to appreciate Mark Twain's "jokes."

First clustering, then a focused free write, and finally collaboration — all techniques I had been using in my writing classes — proved to be equally helpful in examining a literary selection.

TO JOURNAL OR NOT TO JOURNAL

by Mark Hopkins
Rhodes Career Center

To journal or not to journal is the question many English teachers have been asking themselves.

Pardon the pun, but Mr. Shakespeare may have had the same dilemma with his own writing decisions. The journal has become one of the "in" activities for teachers seeking to increase the volume of student writing, to increase the depth, and to track the students' progress in rhetoric, grammar, and mechanics.

My dilemma was whether to join the bandwagon. Well, of course, I did, at least for two grading periods last year. I primed the students and we discussed the goals and objectives for their daily journals. I used a list of suggested journal methods from the *English Journal*, October 1979, and some others, such as asking them to respond to a thought for the day, to a daily word (such as "television" or "weekends"), or to their daily class lessons in English or another class.

At the beginning, I required thirty-five words each day and increased it five words each week, until at the end of the grading period, the entries were up to seventy-five words. As the grading period progressed, I assessed a different primary trait of their writing each week, such as sentences, rhetorical devices, grammar, spelling, mechanics, etc.

However, even with my good intentions and the preparation of the students, plus the checking and reinforcement of their work, the writing did not really improve after the first few weeks. Each day became a battle — the quantity, the quality, and even the subject matter were points of contention. Some students did benefit from the activity, but overall I knew I had to change the activity or surrender.

Instead of a daily journal every week, I now ask for a daily journal every fourth week with space for the journal entries provided on a special weekly assignment sheet. With this format, I use the same goals and objectives only over a longer period of time, giving the students and myself a break to concentrate on other daily assignments. The time in between seems to motivate them to do this type of writing once a month for a week. At this point the journal entries are equal to, or somewhat better than, the first few weeks of the daily journals. Students still are not thrilled with the task, but seem to be willing to try harder and do better if they can see the end of the project. Of course, during the three weeks between the daily journals, there are the regular class and homework assignments to keep them busy and still writing.

To journal or not to journal must be the decision of each teacher, depending upon the goals and objectives that he/she wants to reinforce and stress for student achievement. I have found that working with this type of writing can be a positive experience for both teacher and student. Each teacher needs to do what works for him/her. Mr. Shakespeare did!

GETTING THINGS INTO PERSPECTIVE

by Nancy Jackson
Benjamin Logan High School

One of the most difficult short stories for high school students to understand and evaluate is Katherine Porter's "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall." The difficulty lies in Porter's use of stream of consciousness plot development which allows the reader to follow the flow of thoughts and feelings within the mind of the main character, an old, dying woman. Granny Weatherall, the dying woman, is in a confused and deteriorating mental state drifting between thoughts of her past and actions occurring around her deathbed.

Since the reader is allowed to know only certain events Granny recalls from her past and to sense only what she is aware of in her present, he is somewhat limited and is therefore unaware of thoughts and actions of others in the room who are caring for her. The characters include her daughter, a doctor, a priest and eventually her other children. I point out to the students that only through Granny's thoughts do we learn what kind of woman she is and what kind of life she has led, and because of this limited point of view, we learn very little about anyone else in the story.

This point leads to a challenging writing assignment in which I ask students to consider the point of view used in this unique story. I encourage them to contemplate how the story would be altered if told from another character's perspective. Besides the obvious need for students to review (or reread!) the story, thus helping them to better understand plot and character development, they will learn about the impact of the author's choice of viewpoint.

In stimulating thought, I lead a class discussion or encourage group discussion before students attempt to write. Through an exchange of ideas, students become aware of the differing perspective of characters. For example, Granny, having lost her patience, is annoyed with her daughter's ministrations, while the daughter sees herself as being loving and dutiful. With observations such as this, students should attempt to explain how this story would be radically altered in tone and purpose when perspective is changed.

One other approach that could be used to provoke thought and response would be for students to roleplay the characters of Granny, her daughter, and perhaps her late husband. In doing this, students are able to better understand the attitudes and perspectives of the characters.

These activities should lead students to a written response aimed at helping them understand the effect of viewpoint in story writing.

THE USE OF READER'S THEATRE TO IMPROVE SPEAKING/READING/WRITING SKILLS IN THE CLASSROOM

by Patti Kushmaul
Rhodes Career Center

As a teacher of modified English classes at the JVS, one of my biggest tasks is to help build a positive self-image in my students. Many times, in the halls, I still hear some students say that all the "dummies" are in Mrs. Kushmaul's modified English class. A drama activity, such as Reader's Theatre, reinforces a positive self-image. When students actually perform a play in front of the other English classes, their pride, prestige, and status at the school is increased.

We spend some time in class discussing the major aspects of Reader's Theatre: it has basically a limited set, a small cast of characters, and a text that the actor/readers use during a performance. This also gives me the opportunity to hear from anyone in class who may have had experience onstage before, either in a play or in a musical.

I choose a play called *Conversation — What Is It?*, written by a former drama student of mine who now lives in Kansas City. When she wrote the play, she was 17. This is the same age as many of my students now. Her play seems relevant to them and their daily experiences. We read the play in class to get a good grasp of the flow of the text. We discuss the main messages in the play. One main focus of the play is that people talk *more* than they listen. As an initial assignment before performing the play, students write a paragraph responding to the question, "Do you tend to listen or talk more in daily conversations?" This is a marvelous way to introduce to them the concept that, in a play, as well as in life, we must learn to listen in order to communicate.

As an educational support to the whole exercise, students write about the experience of performing onstage in three separate writing assignments. The first is called a pre-acting paper consisting of a paragraph of at least five sentences in which the student communicates his ideas of how an actor prepares for his role before the performance. The second writing assignment consists of a paper describing how it actually felt to perform onstage. The final paper involves a critique of our entire performance and how the audience reacted to the play.

I have found that this lesson plan works in a small class — such as the ones I have that average about 16-17 students. The Reader's Theatre writing/performing project also makes for a great transition into a unit on job-finding skills. Students can, in groups of two or three, write their own script for *Interviewing For A Job*, a document in which they write and act out positive and negative job interview experiences.

REVISION: STEP BY STEP

by Virginia Kennedy Martycz
Clark State Community College

Students often have difficulty with revision. We emphasize the necessity of revising the entire essay and expect (hope) that students will begin doing so as the quarter progresses. It is all too easy for the complete revision process to become lost as we cover a variety of material. Students often will make only minimal changes in their essays. Since revision is a matter of analysis, I decided to work from the heart of the analysis process — taking apart and examining individual parts to better understand the working of the whole.

During the first 2-3 weeks of the quarter, in conjunction with covering the basic elements of the writing process (invention; purpose and thesis; paragraphing and organization; sentence structure; word choice and tone) students revise the same essay step by step. This forces them to revise one essay five times, focusing on revision at both the micro and macro levels. I have found that this shows them the elements of revision in a less intimidating way than expecting them to suddenly put the entire process together at once. While this exercise delays somewhat the writing of the more formal types of essays (process, comparison, definitions, etc.), it provides a foundation for the higher level of expectations.

The first day of class students are told to "write something" about a topic I give them. I try to select something they can write about from their own experience, but also one that provides a wide range of approaches. The quarter after my son was born, for example, the topic was children. Final essays covered a variety of issues such as care of infants, responsibilities of children, the terrible two's, and teenagers. I provide minimal instructions, in terms of length, focus, etc. This gives me a chance to see how they approach writing. Some students will initially turn in two sentences, others two pages.

After we discuss various prewriting strategies, students are required to use one of the various strategies (freewriting, brainstorming, clustering, or directed questioning) for the given topic. They use their initial writing as a springboard for developing new ideas and bringing their approach to the topic into focus. This is considered the first revision. At this stage, they are revising ideas.

The next class session is used to discuss subject and thesis. Students are placed in dyads and examine each other's invention exercise and initial writing and help each other determine their specific purpose. I do not grade this essay, but react to how their *ideas* help support the stated purpose. At this point, they have revised the initial writing twice.

The third revision takes place after the discussion of paragraphing and organization. The emphasis is on development of ideas and adding detail. By this point they have something which resembles an essay.

The fourth revision focuses on sentence structure. Emphasis is placed on how structure helps advance ideas. Revision at this level is what most students consider to be the basic process. By the time this is emphasized, however, most of them have gone through the process of revising ideas, the most difficult part of the writing process.

The fifth and final revision is completed after the discussion of language and tone. This final essay only faintly resembles the initial draft. Most students are surprised that they are able to make so many changes. This draft receives a grade.

While the process is a bit lengthy, I have found the quality of later assignments to be much higher. Students view revising as a holistic process which demands refinement of ideas and not simply a few word changes.

CONNECTING READING AND WRITING: THE READING JOURNAL

by Lynn Mealy
Clark State Community College

In working with college-level developmental reading students, I have discovered, not surprisingly, that many of them do very little reading outside of my classroom. To encourage their desire to read for their own knowledge and pleasure, I frequently discuss news items and put interesting articles on my bulletin board. I also ask my students to keep a reading journal, containing their thoughts about material they have read at home during the week.

The first journal entries are simple summaries of magazine articles read by the students. Since many of the students are frightened by the writing process, we always construct the first summary together in class. We read an article together and develop an outline on the overhead projector. We then change the outline points into sentences, connecting the points with transitional words. We concoct an opening sentence and a concluding statement and — Voila! — we have a summary.

Each student is then asked to try an outline on his own, choosing an article from a selection of well-organized essays I have collected. Next, he turns his outline into a summary. Finally, the student chooses his own material to summarize. I always collect the original article (or a copy of it) as well as the student's summary. In this way, I can see if he truly "got the point" of his reading.

As the quarter advances, I ask for a more advanced level of reading material and for different kinds of journal responses — a reaction paper rather than a summary, for example. But whatever type of writing we do, we always model the first one together in class. This reduces the students' anxiety and also cuts down the number of complaints that "I don't know what you want."

I collect the journals once a week, and on the day they are turned in, we always take a few minutes to discuss what the students have been reading that week. Sometimes a good discussion is generated about a topic, and students often ask to read each other's articles. Sometimes students are surprised to discover what interesting material is available for them — just for the reading.

A PLACE TO BEGIN: HELP FOR THE RELUCTANT WRITER

by Kim Music
Mechanicsburg High School

Creative Writing is an elective course at our school for students in the eleventh and twelfth grades. I try to make the class a pleasant experience for the students because I want them to leave the course with a positive attitude about writing. It is simple to make writing an enjoyable task for the young, motivated student who aspires to become an award-winning author some day, or even the diligent student who labors away to receive that sought-after high mark. What does a teacher do, however, when faced with the apprehensive writer who is placed into the class for lack of something else to take? Although I wish my class to be enjoyable, I also demand a lot of work from my students, and this fact causes the reluctant writer to cower with fear. One of the strategies I use in this course is something I've come to call "The Writer's Notebook." Others refer to this activity as a journal, log, or diary, but I have found my students enjoy "creating" a writer's notebook. Perhaps the term "notebook" eases the fear students have about writing. After all, they keep notebooks for math and history, so it is natural to have one for Creative Writing.

On the first day of class, students are told that they will be expected to keep a writer's notebook. Students are asked to purchase a folder for the purpose of collecting ideas and storing pieces of writing. Through trial and error, I have found that I must set specifics for the student, or the notebook becomes a catchall for other courses and very little writing takes place. I schedule dates when the notebook will be collected. The entries are not graded for grammar or mechanics, but students are given a specific number of points for each entry as incentive for keeping a notebook. Because my students are usually undisciplined, I also ask for a specific number of entries and I encourage the students to begin with one page of writing per entry. Students not reaching the one page requirement on certain entries are encouraged to expand the amount of writing for that entry, as well as expanding the existing entries, after each reading. Although I do not grade the entries, I do read each one and respond to them with comments when I am especially interested or pleased with the work. It is amazing how relationships develop between teacher and student. The students look forward to my comments and I am always anxious to read their newly-developed pieces or to check progress on an existing piece.

After students have been given the requirements for their notebook, questions such as "Where do I start?" or "What can I write about?" begin to surface. At this point I find that a class discussion on where ideas come from is helpful. Students brainstorm and share ideas and techniques that they have been taught to use to generate ideas for writing assignments. The most important concept that I have learned through this activity is that my students, especially the reluctant writers, find it easier to begin a piece of writing if they begin with something to look at; for example, they might use a picture from a magazine, a cartoon, or even doodles produced by the student. Students feel secure about writing if they have something to look at, and so in their notebook I encourage them to collect visual prompts that will stimulate their writing. The student notebooks become collections of bits and pieces of pictures, drawings, doodles, cartoons, matchbook covers, album covers, posters, swatches of material, ribbon, strands of hair, pieces of overheard conversations, and any and everything else that inspires them. I had one female student who was very artistic. She took a blank sheet of paper and with different

colored markers, she created a page of hodge-podge statements, some of which she overheard from others, some coming from her own thoughts. She then developed a wonderful essay in which she analyzed herself in various situations.

After collecting the vast assortment of items, the students write about what they have collected. Not every object will prompt a written response and not every response will be a creative masterpiece, but the students have a method of finding a beginning to their pieces and they have fun in the process, too.

Although I explain to my students that their notebooks are private and will not be shared with anyone else, I have found that my students volunteer to share their writings. At first it may just be with the person sitting next to them, but usually it leads to a reading for the class. One of the most exciting days in this class for me was the day that one of my students, mainstreamed into the class from his learning disabilities class, shared one of his poems with the other students. Due to this desire to share and discuss the writings, I set aside fifteen minutes at the end of class on each Friday for a sharing experience. This is a voluntary activity and there are times when the students do not wish to share their writings. On those occasions, I sometimes share my writings with the class. I keep a notebook, along with the students, and I leave it on my desk for the students to examine.

My students in last semester's class became so excited with the pieces that were read aloud that they asked to publish a classroom magazine so that they could have lasting memories of the class and their classmates. Every student chose five pieces that he/she felt comfortable with and submitted them to an editorial staff chosen by the class. The editorial staff read through the pieces and chose at least one piece from every student in the class. The pieces were edited, typed, and reproduced. One of our more artistic students created a cover for the magazine and our last two days of class were used to put our magazine together. The finished project titled, *A Collection of Creative Minds*, included essays, poems, and short stories. The students proudly carried their magazines out of the classroom, delighted with their efforts.

"The Writer's Notebook" has been an effective project for both my students and for me. By using materials which stimulate their own interests, the apprehensive students find useful methods to get themselves going and they feel less intimidated by the other students. The upper-level students with some writing ability, by using materials of choice, find a creative outlet to explore. An important plus for the classroom teacher is that this project frees him/her from assigning prewriting activities for each writing assignment. By using "the writer's notebook" as a part of my creative writing class, I have taken a little of the load off of my shoulders and created some responsibility for my students, and in the process, we all have fun.

RIDDLE ME THIS

by Sarma Orlowski
Fairborn High School

In a remarkably short time, the initiated literature teacher comes to the sad recognition that students are, by and large, intellectually lazy and undisciplined readers. Even those students who claim they enjoy reading limit themselves almost exclusively to light literature (á la Danielle Steele or Stephen King). It is not surprising that there is a lamentable decline in reading skills. Raised on a diet of books that can be skimmed without losing much of the story line (nay, entire pages can be omitted!), students become mentally lazy. Worse yet, they try to read everything the same way. One of my goals, then, as their teacher, is to teach them the necessary skill of reading with an open ear and a discerning eye.

Actually, my purposes are twofold: not only do I want them to read in a more controlled, disciplined fashion; I also want them to engage their brains when they write. Unarguably, they need more exposure to the writing process. Perhaps foolishly, I also wish to make these tasks "fun" for them; show them that being challenged — having to work at something — isn't necessarily bad or unpleasant. How, then, am I to accomplish my purpose? If I begin by asking an "analysis" essay question (which requires thought and leaps of intuition), three-fourths of my class will lie dead in the water, absolutely adamant in the certainty that they are incapable of answering the question. The great majority of them have had little (or no) practice in this type of activity. Therefore, I must lead them by hand, nudging them along. One vehicle I have used successfully for nudging their brains in the right direction is the riddle.

The riddle was a commonly used brain teaser during bygone eras, when life and entertainment were simpler. How I introduce my students to riddles will vary, depending on the individual class: I might give them some historical perspective, or I might simply tell them why I am using riddles (what I hope to accomplish) or I might just give them one of the following riddle worksheets with minimal comments. The worksheet I choose to use will vary, depending on the personality and ability level of a given class. Student involvement in this introduction can be achieved by asking them if they are familiar with riddles. Can they think of any samples? (Question: "What's red and green and goes round and round?" Answer: "Frog in a blender.") The teacher can write down their examples, or offer them some 3 x 5 cards that they can turn in on the following day with their modern-day contributions.

Before I actually have them do any of the worksheet activities, I prepare the class for the coming assignment by having them return to the book that we have been reading and by giving them an essay question. The question must be answered in complete sentences in one paragraph (. . . a most elementary writing assignment). I usually offer them questions on three levels of difficulty. They may select the level they wish to answer. I am hoping, at this point, that the difficulties they encounter will show them the inadequacies of their pre-riddle approach to writing/thinking. Sample questions I might use with the book, *To Kill a Mockingbird,* are:

> Level C) Atticus says he wants to prevent his children from "catching Maycomb's usual disease." What is the disease and how does one catch it?
>
> Level B) What lesson does Jem learn from Mrs. Dubose? How does he learn it? How will this help him in the coming summer?
>
> Level A) The title of the book contains a symbol — the mockingbird. There are two people who are mockingbirds in the novel. Who are they and what makes them "mockingbirds?"

After I have collected their papers, I ask the class what problems they have had with the assignment. I might put them on the board. After I read their essays, I sometimes compile a list of the problems I saw in the assignment. Now they are ready to work on the following riddle worksheets (Riddles "X," Riddles "Y," Riddles "Z").

Timing can vary rather widely on this, but after they have done the riddle exercises, they are ready to try their hand at another essay requiring analysis. I tell them to approach their answer, this time, in the same manner that they solved the riddles. They need to *think* about the question before they attempt a final solution. This thinking should manifest itself in prewriting: "Jot down several possibilities that come to mind. Failing that, jot down several answers that couldn't *possibly* be right. Look at what you have written. If these anwers are so obviously WRONG, might not their opposites be RIGHT? Analyze the question. What clues are there in the choice of words? What clues are there in the phrasing? Write out all of your ideas on the top half of the page. Write your final conclusion/the answer on the bottom half of the page."

I find that using riddles can be a useful exercise in teaching students how to analyze. The first riddle sheets are easy enough to assure the students of success in an area in which typical essay questions frequently leave them cold and frustrated (or both). With these first small successes comes a sense of direction, "Yeah, I know how to do these . . ." It is a positive affirmation. I find that students do a much better job of analyzing future questions. It also seems to slow down their reading and to make them look at the material more carefully. Perhaps it serves as a small light in their scholastic tunnel.

Riddles "X"

Select the best answer for each riddle and write it in the blank.

1. _____ What has a face, but cannot see?
2. _____ What has a head, but cannot think?
3. _____ What has hands, but has no fingers?
4. _____ What has eyes, but never sees?
5. _____ What has teeth, but cannot eat?
6. _____ What has a mouth, but cannot talk?
7. _____ What is full of holes, but holds water?
8. _____ What is always coming, but never arrives?
9. _____ What is dark, but made by light?
10. _____ What carries hundreds of needles, but never sews?
11. _____ What is quiet when alive, and noisy when dead?
12. _____ Name me, and you destroy me.
13. _____ The more you take from it, the larger it gets.
14. _____ A little house full of meat, no door to go in and eat.

a hole
tomorrow
a comb
a potato
a clock
a shadow
silence
a river
a leaf
a match
a nut

BONUS: One head
One foot
One body
Four legs . . . What am I? _____

(This riddle does not have its answer supplied.)

Riddles "Y"

A) In spring I am gay
in handsome array;
in summer more clothing I wear;
when colder it grows,
I fling off my clothes,
and in winter quite naked appear.

B) Thirty white horses
upon a red hill.
Now they tramp,
now they champ,
now they stand still.

C) In marble walls as white as milk
lined with skin as soft as silk,
Within a fountain crystal clear
a golden apple doth appear.
No doors there are to this stronghold,
yet thieves break in and steal the gold.

D) Once it was green
and growing.
Now it is dead
and singing.

E) Two brothers we are,
great burdens we bear,
by which we are bitterly pressed.
In truth we may say,
we are full all day,
but empty when we get to rest.

F) What goes on four
legs in the morning,
on two legs at noon,
and on three in the evening?

G) First you see me in the grass,
dressed in yellow gay.
Next, I am in dainty white;
then I fly away.

H) With what vegetable can you
throw away the outside, cook the
inside, eat the outside, and throw
away the inside?

Which riddle is describing: (use the letter)

_____ teeth and gums
_____ an egg
_____ a dandelion
_____ a violin
_____ shoes
_____ man
_____ a tree

What is the vegetable in riddle "H"? _____

BONUS: What is bought by the yard, but worn by the foot? _____

Riddles "Z"

1.) You can hear me.
You can see what I do.
Me, you cannot see. _____

2.) What has two horns
when very young,
no horns in middle age,
and again two horns
when old? _____

3.) Big as a barn,
light as a feather,
and sixty horses
can pull it. _____

4.) Lives in winter,
dies in summer,
and grows with its
root upwards. _____

5.) What is neither in the house,
nor out of the house,
but is still part of the house?
_____

6.) The man who made it had no use for
it. The man who bought it, didn't
want it. The man who got it, didn't
know it. _____

7.) As long as I eat,
I live.
But when I drink,
I die. _____

8.) Ears like a mule,
tails like a cotton ball,
runs like a fool.
_____

9.) A little white fence
that's always wet,
but never rained on,
yet. _____

10.) What is it that rows
quickly with four oars,
but never comes out
from under its roof?
_____

11.) What travels at the speed of sound,
but doesn't have
legs, wings, or engines?
_____

BONUS: What is taller sitting than standing? _____

CLUES: Four correct answers are given in the words below. The remaining six words are wrong/not used. You will have to guess for the remaining, unmatched seven riddles. (What cruelty!)

the sun	a coffin	the moon
a shadow	a seed	rain
a house	a burlap bag	a voice
	a mosquito	

WRITING WITH LETTERS

by Ann Pearson
Rhodes Career Center

Letter writing provides an adaptable vehicle for writing instruction. Good writers can create outstanding letters while poor writers feel less threatened by the length.

Regardless of grade level, a review of standard business and social letter form is beneficial early in the year. Each occasion for a letter can be prefaced with a review of clarity of statement, brevity, organization, and careful editing. The correct form and neatness are always considered.

Different types of letters may be assigned as the year progresses. For example, students may write an order letter to Santa for a desired gift, and, after the holidays, a complaint letter to correct a problem with the gift. I once had a junior who ordered an apple-red Ferrari, and, though Santa filled the order and put the car under the tree, the student complained that the car could not be removed from the living room.

The succinct thank-you letter can provide a great opportunity for a neatly edited, enthusiastic paragraph. Recipients can be speakers, friends, school support groups, or taxpayers who supported a levy.

In science fiction, letters can be written to warn characters, or the public, of impending problems stemming from scientific developments or a scientist's lack of concern for individuality. A student could write to Orwell's Big Brother in *1984* arguing against the prewritten history when personal memory recalled different events.

During a study of students' "roots," each could write to an ancestor praising or complaining about names, inherited physical attributes, or the ancestor's actions. These, of course, require clear description, then careful statements of praise or complaint. A junior girl who bore a man's name wrote to her great-great-grandmother who had the same name and listed all her experiences stemming from the name.

Characters in literature can become letter writers. The student assumes the personality of the person in the story and writes a letter to another character in the selection — or to a present-day reader to explain an action in the story. For example, Frankenstein might explain why he deserted his creation.

A letter can be used in a grammar lesson as an exercise in verb tenses. The writer must explain what had happened, how that is affecting matters presently, and what is projected for the future.

Most satisfying of all to the students are the letters written to living musicians, authors, or politicians who write in answer. Letters to local or state leaders, who act as a result of the ideas or letters to the editor printed in the paper, prove to the students that they have valid thoughts that can be heard. On one occasion students in my class wrote letters to the paper and to the city manager requesting a traffic light at a congested intersection on the edge of campus. The manager invited the students to present their concerns at a city commission meeting, which they did.

Letters provide many advantages for the writing teacher. They focus a student on a specific audience with the salutation. The writer's voice emerges in each letter as the content's direction and structure grow, and their signature at the end heightens their sense of responsibility for the contents. Most endearing of all — they're easy to grade!

WRITING TO SHARE

by Cherie Stock
Springfield South High School

Motivating students to write continues to be a focus of myriad workshops. My object here is to share the best motivating factor I have found to date — writing to be read. Having students share with the class members, especially for extra credit points, what has been written for an assignment had induced more of my students to generate writing assignments than any other technique I have attempted.

Below are assignments geared toward three specific genres. Each is designed to be shared in the classroom and comes with a 50,000 mile warranty. Sharing is best if voluntary, but the teacher can employ a number of incentives and encouragement to maximize participation.

I created this first assignment in anticipation of the arrival of a student teacher. The strategy was so successful that I now frequently begin the year with it myself. It facilitates my learning students' names, it serves as an ice-breaker, and it provides me with two writing samples per student which may be used for immediate direction in planning lessons.

I

The Descriptive Paragraph

1. Review with students and write on the board the parts of a proper paragraph.
2. Specify the students' task: To write a well-organized paragraph describing their physical characteristics so precisely that I can use it to identify them.*
3. Pre-write: Brainstorm on board things that need to be included and how they would be best sequenced.
4. Give students a handout reminding them of the rules for using a sheet of paper (indent, observe margins, etc.) which is to stay in their English notebook.

   * If I know students by name, I have them fold back the name portion of their paper.

After the paragraphs have been written and I have collected them, I assign a second one, an explanation:

The Introductory Paragraph

1. Specify the students' task: To write a well-developed paragraph introducing themselves to the class.
2. Pre-write: Have students offer possible topic sentences, list things on the board that might be included (favorite subject, job, talent, family, clubs, etc.), develop a concluding sentence that represents a long or short term goal.
3. Read one about myself as an example.

Upon completion of the second paragraph, which they have kept, I use the descriptive paragraph to identify the writer who immediately reads his/her introduction aloud to the class. I collect that paragraph and go on to the next description. We are all getting better acquainted, and the irresistible incentive is that until they write their paragraphs, I never know (call) them by name.

II
The Letter

These two assignments usually coax even the most reluctant writers into participation.

1. Give the students a handout on the form of a letter.
2. Pre-write: Read to students a few "choice" letters from "Dear Abby" or have them bring some in for sharing.
3. The Task: To write a letter to "Dear Abby" in proper friendly letter form, preferably using fictitious names. A number can be assigned for credit purposes. They are to place their letter in a properly addressed envelope and mail it (teacher's desk). This is also a good way to work on some capitalization and comma rules.
4. Envelopes are delivered randomly. Each student then plays "Dear Abby," making a reply in proper friendly letter form and placing them both in the envelope.
5. Later, both letter and reply can be read aloud. Students will enjoy them. Anonymity allows the teacher/class freedom to correct grammar, etc., as they are read. Topics may be recorded for later use in themes, and so forth.

In preparation for the lesson on the business letter, it will be necessary to purchase a paperback of *Freebies* or *Something For Nothing* or the like at any local bookstore. Tear it out in 4-5 page sections and staple.

1. Use a handout or grammar text for business letter form.
2. Ask the students to browse book sections until they find something of interest to send away for.
3. Have students peer-check rough draft copy against "book offer" for any requirements (i.e. self-addressed, stamped envelope) as well as for editing.
4. Mail final draft — a field trip to the post office for mailing and a tour may be appropriate. Items are to be mailed to the school via the teacher. Students will be thrilled to receive their mail in class, and the exercise may have to be repeated!

III
The Short Story

I originated this last assignment as an exercise in listening/reading for textual clues to detect foreshadowing.

1. Obtain a copy of Manly Wellman's "Where Angels Fear" (In *Ghostly Tales to be Told;* also a slightly altered version in the *NOVA* literary anthology).
2. Discuss Alexander Pope's maxim "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread," and then repeat the story title.
3. Read the story to them (lights out?) up to the point where Muriel says to Scotty,"Look!" Remind students that it is midnight in the haunted house. They're in the haunted room sitting beneath "the hooks." Refrain from priming the class any further.
4. Have them write an ending to the story. The story is a treasure trove of textual clues, and students who listen closely will delight you with the multiplicity of possible endings (I find the actual one disappointing).
5. While students are sharing their endings, the class responds with the textual clue (a dream, a joke, a murder plot, an escapee from a mental institution, a supernatural tale, etc.) that provided the idea for the ending. The lesson may be expanded to discuss literary techniques such as macabre, irony, suspense, etc. This is also an excellent springboard for further work with dialogue and is a natural for October 31.

Sharing writing assignments aloud has many advantages. Students are given an immediate sense of audience. The class entertainers have an environment in which they flourish. The teacher can focus on composition weaknesses as they are exhibited. And, the comradery it fosters is invaluable.

PARTNER OUTLINING: A STRATEGY TO HELP STUDENTS REVISE

by Lois Stover
Wittenberg University

Last night I again encountered one of my biggest frustrations as a writer. My husband, reading a draft of a journal article I'd written, said, "This paragraph doesn't seem to relate to the rest of the piece," about a section of the article I felt provided an important example of the concept I was discussing. Obviously, I still needed to work on the writing so that the message I wanted to communicate was the one actually received by my reader.

Students, too, are often dismayed to find that what their readers "get" from a piece differs from what they thought they were giving. The strategy of partner outlining is one way I have found of helping students learn to revise their writing so that they communicate their ideas more clearly in their final draft, while in the process also learning to be better readers of others' work.

To introduce this strategy, the reader should guide the class through the process of outlining an essay or story which everyone has read. For each paragraph of the piece, the class provides a sentence or phrase summary and then defines the purpose of that content within the rest of the piece. Does the paragraph introduce a concept? Define? Illustrate? Tell a story? Summarize? Persuade? Provide information? Provide a break in tension? Describe a setting or character? In short, why did the author include the paragraph in the piece?

Once they feel comfortable with the outlining process, students outline their own writing, again summarizing each paragraph and identifying the function with the entire piece. Then, students trade their original papers with a partner. The partners outline the papers now in front of them.

Once the partners have completed their outlines, they exchange them, returning the outline to the author of the piece. At this point, students should have their original writing, their own outlines, and the outline of a peer in front of them. Now, students compare the two outlines, looking for points of discrepancy. Whenever they discover a difference of opinion, either about the content or function of a paragraph, they must decide as writers whether to change the original, whether to change and elaborate upon what they originally wrote in order to clarify the message, whether to delete passages identified as superfluous, or whether to revise their work in other ways based on their partner's feedback — as I decided to do on the difference between my husband's view of my piece and my intentions.

Teachers should note that discussion frequently occurs during the process of comparing the outlines as students try to explain verbally their own sense of one main idea, focus, or the usefulness of a particular segment of their writing. Often, as students talk, they arrive at the solution to their writing problems, finding an appropriate word, example, or transition to better convey their meaning. Teachers need to recognize when this chatter is productive and allow it to continue, rather than insisting that the partners work in silence.

The results I have experienced from using this strategy in my classes encouraged me to recommend it to others. For one, students have a structured method of responding to each other's work and of receiving a response to their own; students who do not function well in a less-structured writing group can participate in partner writing. Two, students are forced to read their own work with their audience in mind as they attempt to articulate just what each paragraph contributes to the total piece and thus to the total message being conveyed. The idea that writing is an act of communication is affirmed

because the writers must move out of their egocentricity to understand the other readers' points of view, and they must revise what is often a personally meaningful first draft so that it will reach a wider audience. Also, in responding to each other, students develop a critical perspective that, through much practice, they can apply to their own work. Eventually, students learn to identify for themselves where their intended message may not be the message a reader will receive; gradually, students become more able to revise on their own.

Although partner outlining works especially well in more typically academic writing which is clearly sequenced, such as comparison/contrast essays, research papers, sets of directions and "how-to" pieces, or persuasive essays, it also works for other genres and can serve to guide students through a poem. For instance, students can paraphrase a line from a poem and then discuss what it contributes to the rest of a piece. Because students often feel poems to be more complex, they find commenting on poetry, written either by professional poets or their own peers, difficult. Exchanging papers and going through the outlining process encourages the close reading poetry demands while providing a framework within which response can occur.

In general, students engaging in partner outlining not only become better writers but better readers of their own and others' work. They develop an ability to relate context and function, therefore understanding how good writing works in conveying its message.

THE GOOD OLD DAYS

by George Welsheimer
Bellefontaine High School

I must admit that I am a nostalgia nut, so this activity may appeal to me more than others, but the saving grace of this exercise is that the students enjoy looking back at "the good old days." The students love to chortle and to "poke fun at" the past styles and fads; however, they do identify with the chronological age of the pictured students, even though the photos may be fifty years old. How do we create this comparison with days gone by? It is simple. We use school publications which cover the past fifty years, the school yearbooks and newspapers.

First, we assemble thirty or forty yearbooks which cover the past twenty years. Yearbooks from Bellefontaine High School, as well as yearbooks from other schools in the area, are included. The latter adds a dimension of contrast for those who need more diversity for their development. Of course, the major area of comparison centers around the different decades represented by these annuals. Supplement these with my very own annuals from the years 1960 through 1962 and I have a subject of interest which is unparalleled in the history of masochism.

I enjoy including my annuals because the students have an obvious "before and after" target readily available. The obvious contrast of a young, virile, scholastic man with a short, plump, balding adult of forty-five is too tempting to resist. Even the most reluctant writers salivate at the opportunity to compare the demise of this once "hip" teenager to the crumbling ruins standing before them daily. These writers seldom chant "we can't think of anything to write," but rather leap into the chore of comparing and contrasting the days of yore to the present times. It is best to have thick skin and a solid self-image, but it is imperative for one to avoid mirrors for weeks after the exercise, if one chooses to include one's own annual.

Next, I add the icing to the cake. I have binders and boxes of our school newspapers. These papers cover the past fifty years and they provide a great source of information. The students are able to find uncles, aunts, cousins, brothers, fathers, mothers, and acquaintances in these volumes. Now we add the written word, including names and places. No longer are they scrutinizing photos and brief statements, but they are actually reading and absorbing information. We become much more specific now as to the exact similarities and differences. We actually begin to analyze rules and philosophy, not only the superficial world of yearbooks. I ask them to narrow the scope of their work by zeroing in on statements about the school and the student body. I ask that they evaluate the male/female relationships, etc. I realize that hairstyles and clothes are blatant sources for comparison, but now I ask that they become more concrete with substantive comparison of the administration, the faculty, the student body, and the facility itself.

The students are asked to analyze the apparent morés as they seem to be present in other decades. I ask them to compare the 40's with the 50's, the 50's with the 60's, the 60's with the 70's, and the 70's with the 80's. Next, I ask them to find some general characteristics which are similar in all of the decades. After that I ask them to find a major area of difference among all of the decades. Normally they are not able to contrast as easily as compare in this area. It is difficult to be very specific in the comparison of decades, so patience is not only a virtue, but a necessity. They develop more ability as they settle and focus on certain areas and begin to analyze the eras in a descriptive essay. A student who plays in the marching band may analyze the size, garb, and instrumental composition of the marching band in the 50's, 60's, 70's, and 80's. To become more specific, one may analyze the composition of the band. How many girls or

boys are in the band? How many drums or trumpets are in the composition of the band? Does the band have flags, rifles, xylophones, etc.? Which businesses in town still exist and were band patrons in the paper?

The use of annuals and student newspapers to prompt the writing of comparison and contrast compositions is constructive and enjoyable. Whether the past is "the good old days" or "the bad old days," nostalgia is a prime catalyst and our students are very comfortable with it. Not only are they comfortable with this level of historical perspective, they are eager to deal with it. There is little reluctance and few "I can't think of anything to *write* abouts," and the scarcity of those laments is, in itself, a breath of fresh air.